

MONTANA UPDATE

Montana Department of Commerce

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Summit Brings Tourism to the Forefront

Members of Montana's travel and tourism industry along with Lieutenant Governor John Bohlinger recently returned from a trip to Washington D.C. where Montana joined forces with the national tourism industry in the first ever Travel Leadership Summit, September 12-13.

The two-day summit was designed to provide travel industry leaders with an opportunity to directly communicate with policymakers about the key issues that impact not only the constituents in our own states but also the millions of Americans who owe their livelihood to travel and tourism.

Along with the Lieutenant Governor, Montana's 12-person delegation included representatives from the tourism regions, convention and visitor bureaus, Tourism Advisory Council, Tourism Industry Association of Montana (TIAM), Montana Department of Commerce-Travel Montana, the National Park Service and Montana's Native American tribes. This delegation met with each of Montana's congressional representatives and key staffers to emphasize the importance of keeping Montana's tourism industry vital and productive. The key issues addressed included Park Service funding and use plans, airline service, the Western Hemisphere Transportation Initiative as it pertains to Montana-Canada border crossings, Museum of the Plains Indian federal funding and general support and understanding of the economic significance of the industry.

In its entirety, more than 1,000 travel industry leaders participated in the Summit, including 130 Members of Congress. Montana's participation was sponsored and coordinated by TIAM.



Hands of Harvest Artists Featured In Group Shows

Artists involved with the regional cultural tourism project—Hands of Harvest: The Craft-Heritage Trails of North Central Montana—will be featured in two group shows during October and December.

In October, Missoula's Whooping Crones Gallery is hosting a "Hands of Harvest-only" juried, month-long show. It opens October 6 with a kick-off reception during Missoula's "First Friday" art gallery walkabout. The October 6-28 show features the variety of art and handcrafts produced and available from Hands of Harvest's 120+ members. The show includes hand-colored photographs, handmade paper, paintings, stained glass, beadwork from Chippewa-Cree tribal members, entries from the Blackfeet Heritage Center and Art Gallery in Browning, hand-crafted canoes, furniture, sculptures and jewelry. This will be the organization's first group showing outside their region.

The Hands of Harvest group show moves to Great Falls in December where it's featured throughout the month with two other exhibits at the High Plains Heritage Center.

The Hands of Harvest project is also moving forward on signage and a second edition of their guidebook thanks to an \$11,100 Preserve America/Montana Rural Heritage Experience Grant. Matching this State Historic Preservation Office grant with almost \$18,000 in local investment, Hands of Harvest will develop and install interpretive signs directing visitors to their members' studios, galleries, ranches, lodging and local restaurants along the trail's five self-guided loop tours in rural north central Montana.

Hands of Harvest was one the cultural tourism projects coming out of the 2002



painting by Brenda Insa

Share Your Heritage Workshop held in Missoula and sponsored by the National Trust for Historic Preservation, Montana Arts Council, Missoula Cultural Council, U.S. Forest Service, Glacier Country, and Travel Montana. The organization has received support from Russell County and the Cascade County Extension Program as well as its membership.

For more information, go to their website: www.handsofharvest.org or email: info@handsofharvest.org.

Montana Listed Among Top ABA Events

The American Bus Association (ABA) announced that Custer's Last Stand Reenactment near Hardin has been designated as one of the Top 100 Events in North America for 2007 by an elite tourism industry selection committee. Inclusion in the Top 100 list, published as a supplement to the September/October issue of *Destinations* magazine, indicates that this event offers excellent entertainment value to both tour groups and individual travelers from around the world, said ABA.

According to recent studies, one overnight visit by a motorcoach group can leave from \$5,000 to more than \$13,000 in a local destination's economy. Those dollars are spent on lodging, meals, admissions, fees, shopping, souvenirs, services and local taxes.

"Simply put," said Peter J. Pantuso, ABA's president and CEO, "motorcoach groups spend more and stay longer. That's why Custer's Last Stand Reenactment is truly a local economic asset. There is no better way to jump-start tourism than to attract motorcoach groups to a great event and convince them to extend their stay."

Special Events Grant Program Funds Available

Montana communities, organizations and tribal governments sponsoring or planning new annual events are invited to apply for

\$50,000 in state tourism "bed tax" grant funds available from the Montana Department of Commerce, Travel Montana Special Events Grant Program (SEGP). The SEGP application deadline is January 12, 2007.

Events or festivals established prior to May 30, 2004 are not eligible for funding under the program. Grants will be awarded based on a 3-tier approach that ranks counties on the basis of lowest per capita income, slowest population growth and highest unemployment. The grants are designed to be matching funds for non-profit organizations involved in developing new annual events.

Did You Know?

Public Relations (PR) continues to be one of the successful, far reaching ways that Travel Montana creates interest in Montana as a vacation destination. Here are examples of recent editorial hits (magazine articles, newspaper features, TV shows, web site mentions) that are helping to woo visitors to our state...

- When the Beartooth Highway officially reopened this past Memorial Day, articles appeared in a number of in-state newspapers. In addition to these, several regional and national magazines (*Northwest Travel*, *Outside*, *Men's Journal*) also covered the Beartooth Highway as a Top 10 Scenic Drive and a Prime Weekend Getaway. Newspapers in surrounding states (Wyoming, Idaho and Utah) also covered the story.

Press Trips: Both group FAM's and individual press trips continue to draw qualified journalists to Montana where their first-person experiences turn into glowing narrative articles...

- Peter Fish, editor at large with *Sunset*, continues to put out feature length stories from his visit to Montana last summer. His most recent, "The Road to Wonderland" highlights his stay in Paradise Valley and Yellowstone Park.
- Andrew Cherney, who did a Harley-Davidson press trip through Russell Country in June, just produced a four-page feature for *Motorcycle Escape* magazine.
- Tom Wharton, Travel Editor at the *Salt Lake City Tribune* was hosted by the Big Sky Chamber back in July and has already produced two nice stories from that visit.
- Michele Newman, who was hosted at the Nine Quarter Circle Ranch's annual quilting retreat, wrote "Quilt'em Cowgirl" for the August issue of *American Patchwork & Quilting*.
- A feature article "Contemporary Cowboys," written by Montana journalist Jean Arthur with assistance from Travel Montana, and an accompanying front cover photo by staff photographer Donnie Sexton, appeared in *Horizon Air Magazine's* August 2006 issue.
- "Blazing the Mullan Road" by Candy Moulton, who frequently writes about Montana, highlights Missoula, Great Falls, Fort Benton, and other Montana towns along this historic route in the September 2006 issue of *True West*.

Montana Historical Society News:

- Ellen Baumler has received the American Association for State and Local History Award of Merit for "Beyond Spirit Tailings: Montana's Mysteries, Ghosts, and Haunted Places," published by the Montana Historical Society.

For more information about the SEGP, or to request an application, contact Carol Crockett, Travel Montana, 406-841-2796. SEGP application materials can be downloaded from Travel Montana's Intranet site: travelmontana.mt.gov.

Fresh Faces

As the autumn leaves appear, change is in the air, including changes in the tourism industry. At the October Tourism Advisory Council gathering, participants met the three newest members of Montana's Convention and Visitor Bureaus (CVBs): Sara Rowe, Butte CVB Coordinator, Cheryl Weaver, Great Falls CVB Marketing/PR Coordinator and Jan Metzmaker, Whitefish CVB Director. Each is excited to bring a passion and broad knowledge base to their region and Montana's tourism industry. Please extend a warm welcome to these new, fresh faces of Montana's tourism family.

Alternative accessible formats of this document will be provided to disabled persons on request.

Calendar of Events:

October

- 1-3 Tourism Advisory Council (TAC) Meeting, Glasgow, MT
- 6-18 Taiwan, Japan and Hong Kong sales mission
- 9 MPD Office closed for Columbus Day
- 11-13 TIA Marketing Outlook Forum, Boca Raton, FL

November

- 6-9 World Travel Market, London

For all of the latest Montana tourism industry information log on to:
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